

8. Getting the Word Out and the Teens In – Promoting the Program

Wherever teens are, that is where you should promote the summer reading program. Of course you want to do promotion in the library, but this only reaches the teens that already come to the library. Promoting the program can be as simple as flyers, or as advanced as giving a presentation at a local function, but however you can do it – just do it!

Start promoting early enough to get involvement, but close enough to the program so that the young adults will remember.

If you have a teen group, make them an active part of promoting the program. Not only can they help distribute flyers and posters, they can promote the program to their peers. They can be a great asset in creating flyers and other promotional materials. Use the clip art included in your start-up kit to “custom design” materials. Using three basic principles of flyer/poster design – keep it simple, use few words, and incorporate lots of white space and graphics – they can help you turn out some outstanding promotional materials!

Sponsors of your program will generally help in the promotion. Besides displaying posters or flyers in their business, get them involved in promoting the program in other ways. Whether they are donating money, goods, space, or time, they want to see the program to which they are contributing succeed.

If you are posting information at an activity center or at group meetings, get the activity leaders/parents involved. This is especially important if the teens are not yet driving. If the library is not within walking distance, someone is going to have to bring them in, right? If the parents think the program is worthwhile they are more likely to help promote it. This might not ensure that the teens will like the program, especially if it's an activity their parents are “making” them do. But often teens discover the program offers them opportunities to meet new friends, spend time with the old ones, and just generally enjoy themselves.

Pick and choose from the ideas that follow, based on your time –

Got a little time?

- 🕒 Send or take news releases to newspapers, radio and television stations (see samples included in the Appendix). Get spots on several different radio stations. Getting deejays involved works even better.

- ⌚ Display posters and reading records in the young adult area and all around the library.
- ⌚ Ask circulation staff to place a reading record or TSRP flyer in books checked out to young adults.
- ⌚ Take or send posters to the area schools. Ask the librarians or principals to display them.

Got a Little More Time?

- ⌚ Word of mouth is a wonderful way to promote the program. Talk about the program to teen groups, visit school classes, have teens talk about the program to their friends.
- ⌚ Use the enclosed clip art to develop "custom designed" flyers. Display them at local businesses and other areas that teens frequent during the summer:
 - ★ Mall or shopping area
 - ★ Groups or meetings (Girl Scouts, church groups, etc.)
 - ★ Activity centers (YMCA, YWCA, Karate schools, community centers)
 - ★ Recreational facilities like roller skating rinks, pools, parks
 - ★ Fast food restaurants (McDonalds, pizza places, ice cream, etc.)
 - ★ Convenience stores
 - ★ Bookstores, music stores, video rental stores, clothing stores
 - ★ Schools
- ⌚ If you have a local celebrity, having them "sponsor the program" will greatly increase the popularity of the program. If people that teens admire or respect think the program is fun or important, so will those teens.

Lots of Time???

- ⌚ Post your information electronically -- community web pages, the library homepage, local school home pages, electronic marquees.
- ⌚ Ask the high school video club to produce a promotional video for distribution to junior high and high school libraries.
- ⌚ Work closely with the schools!

Promoting at Schools...

Visiting the schools in your area is a fundamental way to promote both the library and the summer reading program. Besides providing teens with information about the program, you have provided them with a contact – a friendly face in the library! Promoting the reading program can become just a part of what you are doing all school year long. Remember though, don't wait to start visiting the schools and advertising the program until right before it begins! Too late is too little!

At the beginning of the school year introduce yourself to key people: school librarians, principals, superintendents and teachers that would be interested in the summer reading program. Promote all library services to these groups and start fostering communication and cooperation. The best time to begin is shortly after the school year begins. A letter or flyer sent to the schools just letting them know who you are can be effective, but a scheduled appointment, especially with the school librarian, is better. Each school district is varied in the way they handle outside visitors. It is very important to follow the procedures they have in place.

Regular communication with the school is the most effective way to promote the library and library programs. Advertise new materials and services that might be of interest to them. However, if you don't have the time to promote the library all year long, it is still necessary to market the summer reading program in the junior high and high schools. The students there are your intended audience! A sample letter to principals and teachers is included in the Appendix.

Basic

- ★ Send a flyer or information to school librarians and individual teachers who might promote the program in their classroom (especially English and literature teachers).
- ★ Visit one or two classes during "library time" with reading records to hand out to teens.

Intermediate

- ★ Send flyers to selected students/classrooms.
- ★ Visit several classrooms, or promote the program at a general assembly with reading records to pass out.
- ★ Focus on a specific group; for example, visit all seventh grade classrooms.

Advanced

- ★ Start early with flyers to all students in all schools several weeks before school is out.
- ★ Go to all schools with reading records near the end of school.
- ★ Visit as many classrooms and general assembly presentations as possible.
- ★ Produce a video that teachers can show in their classrooms about the summer reading programs.
- ★ Work with the schools to have the summer reading program be part of their summer school program.

